

*******DRAFT MINUTES*******

Alexandria Board of Architectural Review
Old & Historic Alexandria District

Wednesday, November 16, 2011
7:30pm, City Council Chambers, City Hall
301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Members Present: Tom Hulfish, Chairman
Chip Carlin
Oscar Fitzgerald
John von Senden
Arthur Keleher
Wayne Neale
Peter Smeallie

Staff Present: Planning & Zoning
Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Chairman Hulfish.

I. MINUTES

Consideration of the minutes of the public hearing of November 2, 2011.

BOARD ACTION: Approved, as submitted, 7-0.

On a motion by Mr. Smeallie, seconded by Dr. Fitzgerald, the minutes were approved, as submitted, 7-0.

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. CASE BAR2011-0098

Request for arbor at **108 Quay St**, zoned RM Residential

APPLICANT: Martha Gabriel

BOARD ACTION: **Approved, as submitted, 6-1.**

SPEAKERS

Ms. Rebecca Bostick, architect, spoke in support of the application and described how she helped the applicant after the porch permit was revoked, by taking a portion of the former porch framing and redesigning it into a garden arbor similar to the arbors of the adjacent neighbors. She said she used the existing columns and two beams set into masonry wall. She said that, with the exception of about 7 square feet, the arbor will be visually open and the structure will not restrict views. She described the arbor as a simple little structure.

Ms. Martha Gabriel, applicant, gave a history of the case and described the various conversations she had with her neighbors' regarding the partially constructed screened porch and the proposed arbor. She said that a number of neighbors had suggested that she construct an English conservatory where the partially constructed porch was located. She said that she met with BAR staff about that possibility, but quickly realized that she would need an extensive number of permits. After visiting some other neighbors' yards, she decided instead to construct an arbor similar to 112 Quay Street, though smaller.

Mr. Michael Morris, 106 Quay Street, spoke about the visibility of the structure from the public right-of-way, even after the porch roof has been removed. He asked the Board members if they had received the letters and had a chance to look at the property to see the porch framing and the location of the future arbor. He said that since construction was stopped in April, it was not a good situation for him and his neighbors to have to live next to this property. He said that the arbor would be clearly visible from Founder's Park and that even though the porch roof was removed not much had really changed and that the arbor was a non-complying structure. He said that he was unhappy with both the height and the volume of the proposed arbor, which would be over 10'-4" high and would project 4' over the fence, which would tower over adjacent properties. He suggested that moving the arbor to the back of the yard would be less offensive, could be lower and wouldn't be visible. He said lining it up in the rear yard would create more of a rhythm with the other arbors in the rear yards. He said that he is concerned about the hodge-podge of structures in the rear yards of the houses in his neighborhood that it looks like a patchwork. He said he also thinks that the proposed white color of the arbor would make it stand out too much, and that the other arbors are brown and less obvious. He said that he has spoken with a real estate agent who said that the arbor would reduce the value of his property. He asked the BAR to deny the application, or to approve it only if the arbor is repositioned to the rear of the yard and made more discreet.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Smeallie stated that he thought the arbor was too big in both height and size and was overwhelming to the site. He thought it was not a designed element but rather an afterthought, using former porch framing to create an arbor. He said he thought it would overwhelm the site and agrees with the solution proposed by Mr. Morris. He said he thought the Board should have the applicant reconsider the design of this and not simply make an arbor out of a revised porch/addition. He said the proposed arbor didn't look right, it was sloppy.

Mr. Kelleher stated that the Board had approved a number of projects in this development over the years – things on top of roofs, on the back of roofs, sometimes visible, sometimes not - and he thought the arbor would blend in well with the surrounding architecture.

Mr. Neale felt that the applicant had been through an ordeal to get in front of the BAR and had gone out of their way to be reasonable and cooperative. He said that they have listened to and responded to the City. He stated that the arbor will be minimally visible from the right-of-way. He said there were other arbors in area and did not think it would

create a patchwork anymore than different dormers or other elements do. All of the dormers, rear yard arbors, etc. just add variety to individualize buildings and that is what Old Town all about that. He said that the height of the arbor is determined by door head height and that it was low as it could possibly be. He said he thought the arbor itself was well located next to the south-facing house because it will provide shade. He said that the owners been through turmoil and indignity struggling to find this reasonable solution. He asked why there was such confusion about the original application.

Mr. Cox explained that there was a misunderstanding on the part of the contractor about what constituted open space, so the materials submitted with the application represented open space when there was actually not enough to construct a roofed structure, such as the previously proposed screened porch.

Mr. Carlin agreed with both Mr. Neale and Smeallie. He said the height issue had to do with the side beam, which was visible from the park, and suggested that the height could possibly be reduced slightly by lowering the rafters to within the beam footprint. He had no objection location of the arbor and felt that it would be much smaller than the arbor two doors down. He said that lots of people add arbors at the rear of houses for a degree of privacy. He said he could live with it as submitted, though there could be minor revision to reduce height a bit.

Mr. von Senden said he supported the application and that Mr. Neale had already made most of his points. He said he disagreed that changing the beam arrangement around would lower it 1.5'.

Dr. Fitzgerald said that he thought the neighbor might have misunderstood the process. He said the issue was not whether the arbor was visible. If visible, it can be built. It simply must be reviewed by the Board. He said he had a really hard time seeing it from the right-of-way.

Dr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve the application, which was seconded by Mr. Kelleher, and approved by a vote of 6-1 (Mr. Smeallie voting in opposition).

REASON

The Board felt that the arbor would be minimally visible from the public right of way, was similar to other arbors nearby, an attractive addition to the property and an architecturally appropriate feature for the back of the house.

2. CASE BAR2011-0301

Request for signage at 621 King St, zoned KR King Street Retail

APPLICANT: Burke & Herbert Bank & Trust Company

BOARD ACTION: **Deferred for restudy, 7-0.**

SPEAKERS

Mr. Gary Brent, representative for the applicant, spoke in favor of the application. Mr. Brent said that Staff recommendation #2 and #3 were problematic for the bank and that they did not think both conditions were necessary. He said that the bank was fine with changing the backing color for the back plate, but he didn't think it was necessary for Staff to review the lighting levels in the field because the backing color didn't impact the level of illumination. In regards to condition #4, Mr. Brent said that they would like to work with Staff to use a different material for the hanging sign without having to return to the BAR for approval.

Mr. John Hynan, Historic Alexandria Foundation, asked about the "&" in the sign and was concerned about the hanging sign coming down during a wind storm.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Smeallie said that he didn't think that the sign should be illuminated at all. He gave example of new buildings where illumination was allowed, but said that he could not think of early buildings where the Board approved illuminated signs. He said that there weren't any examples of illuminated signs on this block and that there is a lot of ambient light, so seeing the bank would not be a problem. He said that illuminating the sign is like advertising. He also agreed with Staff that the use of Plexiglas for letters on the hanging sign was inappropriate but was open to the applicant working with Staff on another material. Mr. Smeallie said he appreciated the fact that the proposed wall sign was much smaller than the existing wall sign.

Mr. Kelleher agreed with Mr. Smeallie and said the Burke & Herbert is such a well-known local bank that doesn't need an illuminated sign. He said that they would be fine with a conservative, discrete sign.

Mr. Neale said that he is usually more open minded than some of the other members of the Board, but agreed with his colleagues on the backlighting issue. He said he thought that the sign was just too contemporary with this building and targeted external lights that aim at the sign would be a better idea. He said that there are places where signs like this would be appropriate, just not in this location. He said that the blue sign color on a blue building was not attractive and that they should consider changing one of the colors, although he acknowledged that the Board didn't have purview over colors.

Mr. Carlin agreed with the comments that had been made and said that the Chart House and CVS examples approved by the Board were a very different context, and even though they were located on newer buildings they were still hard to approve. He said that there are a lot of illegal signs in the historic district – neon open signs, TVs and a significant amount of lighting glare. He said that the proposed sign was not sensitive to the historic building. He agreed that the color of the sign should complement the building color.

Mr. von Senden said that he was initially in favor of the sign but his colleagues had persuaded him to change his mind.

Dr. Fitzgerald was concerned that the sign looked like it was outlined in neon, which the Board never likes. He encouraged the applicant to rethink the whole thing, including the color. He asked the applicant if they would prefer that the Board to deny the application, or defer it for restudy. Mr. Brent said that they would prefer a deferral.

Dr. Fitzgerald moved to defer the application for restudy; Mr. Smeallie seconded the motion, which was approved by a vote of 7-0.

REASON

The Board had no objection to the size or design of the lettering but felt that the illumination of the Burke & Herbert wall sign was inappropriate on the historic building and encouraged the applicant to consider other ways to illuminate the sign. The Board agreed that the applicant could work with Staff on a revised material for the hanging sign letters.

3. CASE BAR2011-0303

Request for demolition/encapsulation at **804 S Lee St**, zoned RM Residential

APPLICANT: Eugene Smith & Laura Doyle by Rebecca Bostick

BOARD ACTION: **Approved, as amended, by a roll call vote, 7-0.**

This item was combined with item #4 for discussion purposes.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

That the statements in R-1, 2, and 3 must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

- R-1 Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-746-4399) two weeks prior to any ground disturbing activity (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of The Zoning Ordinance) on this property. City archaeologists will provide on-site inspections to record significant finds in coordination with the contracting schedule.
- R-2 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-746-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
- R-3 The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

4. **CASE BAR2011-0304**

Request for addition at 804 S Lee St, zoned RM Residential

APPLICANT: Eugene Smith & Laura Doyle by Rebecca Bostick

BOARD ACTION: **Approved, as amended, by a roll call vote, 7-0.**

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. That the statements in R-1, 2, and 3 must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.
 - R-1 Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-746-4399) two weeks prior to any ground disturbing activity (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of The Zoning Ordinance) on this property. City archaeologists will provide on-site inspections to record significant finds in coordination with the contracting schedule.
 - R-2 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-746-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
 - R-3 The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

SPEAKERS

Ms. Rebecca Bostick, architect, spoke in support of the application and said that she had read and agreed with the Staff recommendations and was available to answer any of the Board's questions.

Mr. John Hynan, Historic Alexandria Foundation, said that the foundation had no objection and that the addition was an improvement.

Mr. Chris Randolph, 802 S. Lee Street next door, spoke in opposition to the project. He was concerned about a number of impacts to his property with the proposed project, including: a 20 foot wall against his property creating an alley-like feeling in his back yard; property damage to his home during construction; and, environmental impacts during construction from lead, mold and asbestos. He said that the addition would be a permanent nuisance that would negatively affect his property value when he decided to sell his house. He said that the addition is excessive in scale, dwarfs his house and due to the 10-hour-a-day construction, would require high pet sitting costs. He said that the addition wasn't keeping with the style of the neighborhood by using vinyl and cables in the construction.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Smeallie said he supported the addition with the Staff recommendation.

Mr. Kelleher said that this is the 7th rear addition to houses in this block and that when living in Old Town it's common to have to live with inconveniences such as a neighbor's construction. He apologized for the inconvenience the neighbor would have to endure during the construction of the addition.

Mr. Neale said that the applicant had a large lot and even with the size of the proposed addition the lot was still underdeveloped. He said that a rear addition made the most sense, that adding a front addition or an upper addition would be inappropriate. He said that density is typically added to the rear of properties and that no one is entitled to views, unless there is an easement protecting them. He said that vinyl siding wasn't being proposed but that HardiePlank siding was.

Mr. Carlin complimented the applicant on a well-designed addition.

Mr. von Senden concurred with the positive comments of his colleagues.

Dr. Fitzgerald said that the addition was appropriate and although he sympathized with the neighbor, the BAR was there to review the architectural character of the proposal only, not whether or not an addition could be built.

Dr. Fitzgerald moved the Staff recommendation, which was seconded by Mr. Smeallie, and approved by a vote of 7-0.

REASON

The Board felt that the addition was appropriate and compatible with the Yates Garden townhouse, the scale of these rear yards facing Jones Point Park and other additions that had already been constructed on that blockface.

5. CASE BAR2011-0305

Request for demolition/encapsulation at 705 Bashford Ln, zoned RB Residential

APPLICANT: Matthew Travis

BOARD ACTION: **Approved, as amended, by a roll call vote, 7-0.**

This item was combined with item #6 for discussion purposes.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. That the brick that is being removed from under the current rear first floor window is salvaged and used to fill in the area below of new window opening;
2. That an appropriate mortar composition is used and that the mortar profile and color matches the existing;
3. That the window light configuration on the rear be changed on the first floor to 9 lights per casement sash (18 equal lights total per window opening) and on the

second floor 12 lights per casement sash (24 equal lights total per window opening) to generally match the original light configuration of the metal casement windows;

4. That the window replacements comply with the Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications.

6. **CASE BAR2011-0306**

Request for alterations at 705 Bashford Ln, zoned RB Residential

APPLICANT: Matthew Travis

BOARD ACTION: **Approved, as amended, by a roll call vote, 7-0.**

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. That the brick that is being removed from under the current rear first floor window is salvaged and used to fill in the area below of new window opening;
2. That an appropriate mortar composition is used and that the mortar profile and color matches the existing;
3. That the window light configuration on the rear be changed on the first floor to 9 lights per casement sash (18 equal lights total per window opening) and on the second floor 12 lights per casement sash (24 equal lights total per window opening) to generally match the original light configuration of the metal casement windows;
4. That the window replacements comply with the Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications.

SPEAKERS

Mr. Matthew Travis, applicant, said he supported the staff recommendations.

John Hynan, Historic Alexandria Foundation, spoke in support of the application and said that the improvements were welcome.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. von Senden made a motion to approve the application with Staff recommendation #1, #2 and #4, and recommended that condition #3 be modified to require a 9 light-per-casement sash window on the first floor and 12 light-per-casement sash windows on the second floor. Mr. Neale seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 7-0.

REASON

The Board was supportive of the applicant's proposal to improve the property, in particular the utilitarian rear façade of the townhouse. The Board recommended changes to the light pattern of the windows on the rear façade so that they more closely matched the original casement windows being replaced.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Staff updated the Board about the Work Group being formed by the Parker Gray BAR to review design guidelines for that district.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

The following items are shown for information only. Based on the Board's adopted policies, these have been approved by Staff since the previous Board meeting.

CASE BAR2011-0315

Request for hanging sign and handrail at **215 King St**, zoned KR King Street Retail
APPLICANT: Martha Brumbaugh, B&B 215 King Street Art Gallery

CASE BAR2011-0317

Request for tuck pointing at **200 N Alfred St**, zoned RM Residential
APPLICANT: Thomas and Kathleen Valentine

CASE BAR2011-0322

Request for handrail at **808 Duke St**, zoned at RM Residential
APPLICANT: Marcia Feinstein

CASE BAR2011-0323

Request for repair/replacement due to fire damage at **326 King St**, zoned at KR King Street Retail
APPLICANT: Eastbac by First Restoration

CASE BAR2011-0328

Request for vent opening at **321 Queen St**, zoned at RM Residential
APPLICANT: Andrea Barlow

CASE BAR2011-0329

Request for signage at **127A N Washington St**, zoned at CD Commercial
APPLICANT: The Physical Therapy Zone

CASE BAR2011-0330

Request for roof replacement at **300 N Washington St**, zoned at CD Commercial
APPLICANT: North Washington Realty

V. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hulfish adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:30pm.

Minutes submitted by,

Stephanie Sample, Urban Planner, Historic Preservation
Boards of Architectural Review